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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Israel-European Union Relations

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Key stories in the media:  
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All newspapers reported that Monday, comparing themselves to such freedom fighters as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories backed a call by Pinchas Wallerstein, the head of the Binyamin Regional Council, for the public to fight the disengagement plan even if it means breaking the law. All media reported that A-G Menachem Mazuz ordered the state prosecutor Monday to "examine" the leaflet distributed by Wallerstein. Maariv quoted senior Council members as saying that the Council will circulate a petition among Israelis inside and outside the Green Line, in which the signatories will commit themselves to coming to the Gaza Strip on the day of the evacuation, opposing it forcibly, and exposing themselves to being sent to jail. Leading media reported on a campaign among Gush Katif settlers in the Gaza Strip, particularly Holocaust survivors, to put on orange stars of David reminiscent of World War II-era yellow stars. Last night, Channel 10-TV revealed that thousands of such badges have been produced and that they will be presented Wednesday in a special ceremony. Israel Radio reported that Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, urged that symbols and terminology taken from the Holocaust not be used in the public-political debate. Ha'aretz quoted Police Inspector General Moshe Karadi as saying Monday that public opposition could prevent the evacuation of Gush Katif.

Israel Radio quoted President Bush as saying Monday at a White House press conference, regarding Syrian support for Iraqi insurgents: "We have sent messages to the Syrians in the past, and we will continue to do so. We have tools at our disposal, a variety of tools, ranging from diplomatic tools to economic pressure. Nothing is taken off the table." The radio also quoted the President as saying: "I'm realistic about how to achieve peace. And it starts with my understanding that there will never be peace until a true democratic state emerges in the Palestinian territory." Bush said that the Palestinian elections were the beginning of such a democratic process. Jerusalem Post notes that at his news conference Bush endorsed the idea of holding a Middle East peace conference in the UK early next year.

Israel Radio reported that this morning two anti-tank missiles were launched at a synagogue in a northern Gaza Strip settlement during morning prayers, hitting it directly. No one was hurt. Jerusalem Post quoted Jerusalem police as saying Monday that a 67-year-old American immigrant who was stabbed and wounded outside his home in the city's central Abu Tor neighborhood late Sunday night was likely the target of a terrorist attack.

While some media say that the national unity government will be formed by Thursday, others believe the establishment of the new cabinet could be delayed until next week. All media reported that Monday the Knesset approved, 56 to 34 and two abstentions, a proposed bill allowing the PM to name two deputies. The bill can turn into law only if it garners a majority of 61 votes

in its next readings. Maariv reported that Likud members are pressuring one of the abstainers, the chairman of the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, Likud MK Michael Eitan, to endorse the bill. Israel Radio reported that the Labor Party's Central Committee will meet this afternoon to endorse the party's entry into the government and to choose its ministers in the new cabinet.

Israel Radio reported that today the Justice Ministry will put up on its Internet site the list of the 170 Palestinian prisoners whom Israel is expected to release, in order to come across any objections. Jerusalem Post quoted PA officials as saying Monday they were deeply disappointed by Israel's decision to release only 170 prisoners.

Visiting World Bank President James Wolfensohn was quoted as saying Monday in an interview with Ha'aretz that disengagement is insufficient if it does not give hope to the Palestinians.

Jerusalem Post and other media cited the Industry, Trade and Labor Ministry as saying Monday that Israel and Jordan are set to sign an upgraded trade agreement Thursday, aimed at reducing customs in bilateral trade.

Jerusalem Post cited criticism by visiting Czech FM Cyril Svoboda of the EU's penchant for always trying to "balance" its statements regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yated Ne'eman notes that the Czech Republic has included Hizbullah in its list of terrorist organizations.

Ha'aretz reported that the IDF is planning to hand over Megiddo prison in northern Israel, with its 1,300 Palestinian prisoners, to the Prison Service in the coming months as a first step in what the army hopes will give the Prison Service responsibility for all security prisoners.

Maariv reported that over 100 parents of soldiers have signed a petition calling for refusal to serve in the territories. Yediot reported that a group of parents whose children were killed during their military service sent a letter to the directors of 250 high schools, asking them to convey the following message to parents of youngsters about to be enlisted in the IDF: "Don't be naive like we were. Check very carefully every stupid order that commanders will give your children." Yediot quoted military sources as saying that those comments are unacceptable.

Jerusalem Post reported that a radar for the joint U.S. Israeli mobile laser gun, called the Nautilus, will be deployed shortly near Sderot to track incoming Qassam rockets.

Israel Radio reported that Monday residents of the northern West Bank settlement of Yitzhar disconnected the water supply of an IDF outpost nearby.

All media reported that British PM Tony Blair will arrive today and visit Israel and the PA. Yediot says that PM Sharon will tell Blair that Israel will support the convening of an international conference in London, provided it only deals with the advancement of reforms in the PA, and not with diplomatic or security issues. Some media noted that Blair declined to lay a wreath on the late PA chairman Yasser Arafat's grave in Ramallah.

Ha'aretz reported that the Israel Navy is examining two new medium-size missile boats, Saar 5+, and a new Barak 8 sea-to-sea missile system for defending ships over ranges of more than 100 km, after incoming Adm. David Ben Bashat decided to cancel a plan to acquire 10,000-ton warships. Ha'aretz adds that the Navy is also considering joining the U.S. Coast Guard or Navy in the planning of new missile boats.

Yediot reported that today a group of over 500 Israeli and American plaintiffs, who were victims of terrorist actions in Israel, will file a USD 3.5-billion suit in a Brooklyn court against banks in the U.S., which it believes helped fund those acts. Last Thursday, Yediot had mentioned that the plaintiffs sought USD 2 billion. Jerusalem Post only mentioned that 117 plaintiffs filed a suit against the Jordan-based Arab Bank.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post reported that a U.S. federal judge in Miami Beach approved an agreement between the USG and Hungarian Holocaust survivors, settling what has become known as the "Gold Train" affair. The newspaper quoted Washington insiders as saying that the agreement is likely to include the U.S. Administration's agreement to a USD 25 million compensation payment to fund humanitarian aid to ill

and poverty stricken Hungarian Holocaust survivors. However, Ha'aretz said that sources at Jewish organizations close to the talks declined to comment on the sums involved.

Ha'aretz reported that Monday in Haifa, 300 women attended the first national conference of Jewish and Arab businesswomen, organized by the Center for Jewish-Arab Economic Development in conjunction with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has applauded both fiscal and monetary policies that have helped Israel foster a return to growth after three years of "depress activity. However, the IMF notes that many challenges still lie ahead.

Ha'aretz reported that close associates of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan have asked Israel to use its influence with key Jewish organizations in the U.S. to enlist the Jewish-American community in support of Annan.

Ha'aretz reported that some Egyptian and Saudi intellectuals have criticized the decision not to allow films by Israeli Arabs to participate in the international film festival held earlier this month in Cairo.

Ha'aretz interviewed Prof. Anne Marie Slaughter, the dean at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, who attended the Herzliya Conference. Slaughter, a critic of Bush's policy, said: "I agree with the administration that a democratic Middle East is a very important, crucial goal."

In Ha'aretz, Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann, who are behind Tel Aviv University's Peace Index survey, presented the results of parallel polls in the PA and Israel: 44 percent of Palestinians, 70 percent of Israeli Jews and 58 percent of Israeli Arabs are more optimistic about the chances of peace following Yasser Arafat's demise.

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**1. Mideast:**  
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**Summary:**  
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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The time has come to reduce the settler phenomenon to its true proportions and to cease being afraid of it."

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "When leaders of the Council of Settlements recruit Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King to justify their battle, we can only smile.... The settlers are battling for the occupier, the strong, the armed." Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Wallerstein and his supporters in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] are leading Israel to anarchy."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "[The settlers] are lawfully continuing their daily struggle, without eying imprisonment, as suggested by Mr. Wallenstein."

**Block Quotes:**  
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**I. "Have No Fear"**

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (December 21): "To the settlers' cries that they are being 'transferred' and that Ariel Sharon's government is undemocratic -- two claims whose truth or falsehood is not even worth debating with a public that has been acting outside democracy for 30 years -- the government must first and foremost respond wisely. The time has come to reduce the settler phenomenon to its true proportions and to cease being afraid of it. Lawbreakers should be dealt with using the same tools that are applied to ordinary lawbreakers, who do not enjoy governmental protection. Settler activists from the rest of the country must be prevented from going to [the Gaza Strip settlement bloc of] Gush Katif by every means possible, starting now."

**II. "Love Hurts"**

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (December 21): "The distress felt by the leaders of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories is understandable. For months they have been declaring 'we have love and it will triumph,' even though there is not a trace of love among them at the moment, only anger, which only continues to mount the more they feel that they are losing, not triumphing -- in their battle against disengagement. Their handiwork is drowning in the sea, and Sharon is singing. Monday, after the pathetic crisis with Peres had ended more or less, Sharon took another significant step toward the implementation of the disengagement plan.... The letter by [settler leader Pinchas] Wallerstein was directed primarily inwards, to his constituency. Its immediate goal was to let off steam, to demonstrate to the infuriated settlers that their leaders have not gone into a coma. His colleagues on the Council of Settlements, who had preferred to use pleasant means up until now, dragged their feet and lined up behind him. This is what we can expect to see in the coming months: a furious, hurt community, some of which has despaired and is prepared to take any violent action, and a leadership that is forced to line up behind the threats of the militants. This is a dangerous borderline game and, judging by past experience, is liable to end in disaster. But there is almost no other way to play it.... But when leaders of the Council of Settlements recruit Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King to justify their battle, we can only smile. The latter battled for the enslaved, for the oppressed, for the downtrodden. The settlers are battling for the occupier, the strong, the armed."

### III. "Remember the Warring Tribes of Israel"

Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (December 21): "As long as the majority [of Israelis] agreed to pay for building the settlements and for defending them, to paying a high price for putting up roadblocks on the way to them; and as long as there could be found citizens like me who constantly quarreled with the dissenters from the Left who undermined democracy and the IDF's ability to perform, [settler leader Pinchas] Wallenstein did not find anything wrong in a decision by the majority in the government and the Knesset to continue to maintain the settlements.... Even if Wallerstein manages to deter Sharon at the last minute from disengaging from Gush Katif, this will mean that a minority will have imposed its will on the majority in the name of God and some of the rabbis. This will put an end to the isolation of the extreme-dissenting left wing.... Wallerstein and his supporters in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] are leading Israel to anarchy. The moment that lawbreakers control public life, the sides will loot the IDF weapons storehouses, each wanting a machine gun of its own.... The settlement leaders are in a fierce battle, in the midst of a storm. But they are being asked to behave with a level head. They must take another issue into account: if, despite their declaration of civil war, the democratic majority wins by virtue of force and evacuates Gush Katif, relations between the two sides of the Green Line will not revert to what they were. The open wound will not heal quickly. "

### IV. "Opposition to Disengagement, But Not Through Detention"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (December 21): "Even those who oppose the uprooting of Jewish settlements from Gush Katif (in the Gaza Strip) cannot support [settler leader] Pinchas Wallenstein's letter that calls for breaching the evacuation law, even if this entails going to jail'.... The way chosen by Pinchas Wallenstein is not that of the 'Land of Israel Faithful.' They are fighting the battle honestly and lawfully.... No only does Wallerstein's letter not contribute to the strengthening of the Gush Katif settlers, but it might also weaken the resistance to the evacuation, as a result of his call to 'breach the law,' even if this involved their incarceration.... [The settlers] are lawfully continuing their daily struggle, without eying imprisonment, as suggested by Mr. Wallenstein."

## 12. Israel-European Union Relations:

### Summary:

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU's Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy,

wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The Action Plan affords us a remarkable opportunity to deepen EU-Israeli relations.... Against the backdrop of international events, I sense the timing is fortuitous."

Block Quotes:  
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"The European Neighborhood Policy"

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU's Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (December 21): "To my delight ... the warmth is now returning [to Israel-EU relations]. Changes in the international arena, such as the forthcoming elections in the Palestinian Authority, a new U.S. Administration and indeed a new European Commission, give us a real opportunity to look afresh at our relations and examine where we would like to go from here. And we are fortunate to have the tool with which to do so. On December 13, the European Union and the Government of Israel agreed to an Action Plan, developed as part of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which lays out a number of areas in which we would like to work more closely together.... I believe the Action Plan affords us a remarkable opportunity to deepen EU-Israeli relations in practical and mutually advantageous ways. And, against the backdrop of international events, I sense the timing is fortuitous. We will continue to disagree on some points, but I am sure that the increased level of confidence we have in one another, thanks to this plan, will enable us to discuss those points more frankly and openly than in the past."

KURTZER